

HEC Legislative Advocacy Guide

HEC Helps Hoosiers Become Successful Advocates for Environmental Legislation in Indiana

The Hoosier Environmental Council works with our allies and supporters to promote positive environmental legislation and to prevent potential rollbacks in environmental protection at the Indiana General Assembly.

In the last legislative session, supporters like you sent nearly a thousand messages, helped us spread the word on potentially damaging legislation through social media – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram – and by writing to legislators, committee members, and staying engaged up to the final day of the session.

You CAN Make a Difference!

As former U.S. House Speaker Thomas “Tip” O’Neil always said, “All politics is local.” A letter, phone call, or personal contact with your legislator has significant impact. Voters are important to legislators, and your voice matters to them! Personally contacting your legislators will increase the likelihood that they will listen to you and other constituents on similar issues.

Take Action!

You can get involved in the legislative process by:

- Contacting your representative and senator on bills of concern and in support of strong environmental programs;
- Attending "meet your legislator" events or setting up a meeting in the district;
- Hosting a Greening Your Community House Party;
- Attending an Environmental Advocate training; and,
- Writing a letter to the editor for your local paper.
- Read on for more tips on effective advocacy.

Find the latest bill information, helpful advocacy tips, sample letters and talking points on our priority legislation at Bill Watch 2021, www.hecweb.org/bill-watch-2021.

For more information, or more ways to help, please contact Michelle Jones, HEC’s Outreach Associate, at mjones@hecweb.org

How a Bill Becomes a Law: The Indiana Legislative Process

What are the Opportunities for Citizen Input during the Legislative Process?

After a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee during first reading on the House or Senate chamber floor.

Committee stage

Citizens can attend, and testify, at a committee hearing on a bill, if one is scheduled. Committee chairs decide if bills receive a committee hearing.

Second reading

If a bill passes out of committee, it goes to second reading in the full House or Senate. It may be amended during this stage. Citizens can contact their legislators to support or oppose amendments on second reading.

Third reading

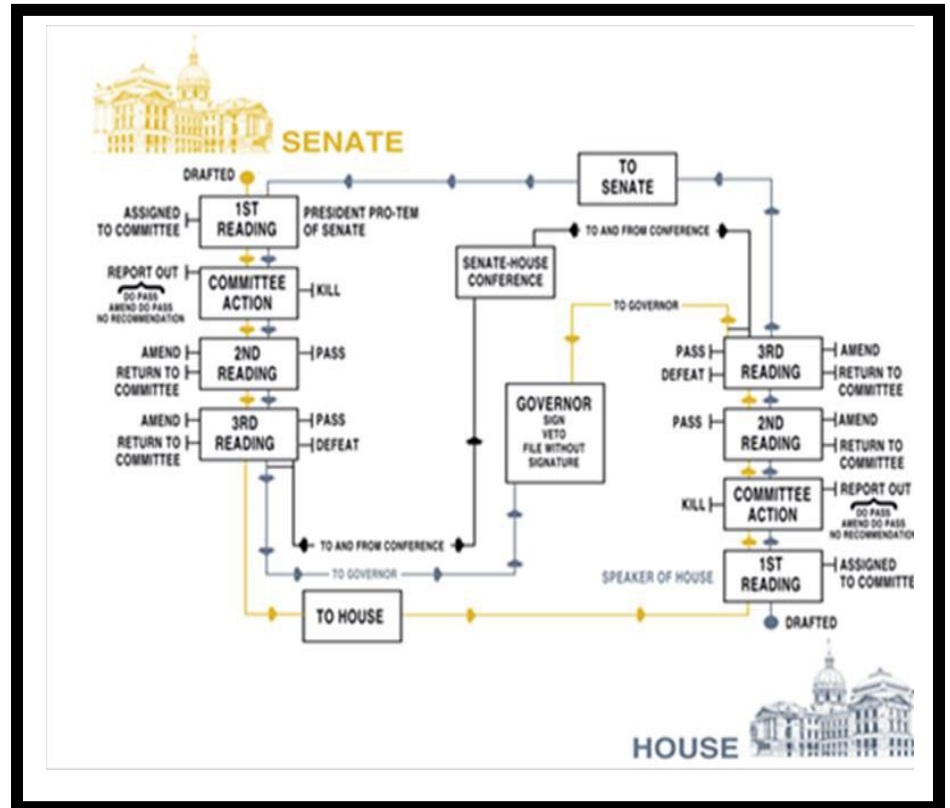
After a bill passes second reading, it goes to third reading in the full House or Senate. Third reading is a roll call vote that determines if the bill is adopted or defeated by the House or Senate. Citizens can communicate with their legislators prior to a third reading vote, urging them to vote YES or NO.

Only legislators are allowed to speak on a bill when it is being considered on the floor during second or third reading.

Once a bill passes the first chamber, the process starts over in the second chamber; i.e., a House bill goes to the Senate, and a Senate bill goes to the House. A bill keeps the same number that was originally assigned, even when it is considered in the second chamber.

Conference committees

Citizens can also communicate with legislators during the conference committee process, when different versions of a bill passed by the House and Senate are reconciled. Conference committee meetings are open to the public, and committee chairs often allow testimony at this stage as well.





Tips on raising your advocacy to the next level

DO go local! Effectiveness is based on geography—legislators are most responsive to their own constituents, and want to hear your opinions as a constituent. Maintain contact with your legislators throughout the year. Best of all, meet with your legislators when they're at home in their district. Nothing is more effective than an in-person meeting. Invite them for coffee, or for a hike in a local park or natural area. You can also find them at many community events. Don't be intimidated – legislators are community members with daily lives not unlike yours.

Stay in touch during the legislative session. Attend “meet your legislator” events such as “Third House” meetings hosted by your Chamber of Commerce or League of Women Voters that occur in the districts during session. This is an opportunity to ask questions, encourage support or opposition for particular bills, and hear legislators' views in a forum where citizens, other community leaders and news reporters are present and will hear your point of view and legislators' responses.

DO your homework! Read the bill and related information, including policy briefs and talking points prepared by HEC.

Seek to understand your legislators and the community interests that may influence them; for example, businesses, local government officials, or civic groups. Don't assume that a legislator supports or opposes your views based on political labels or party affiliation. In many instances, local politics and the preferences of constituents trump other considerations. Don't feel like you have to be an expert, but make sure you can support your position. Personal experiences are the best way to express your views to your legislators; additional facts and statistics – the more locally relevant, the better – can also support your position, but the more personal the contact, the more effective you will be. Follow your legislator on Facebook and Twitter to learn about upcoming events they are attending, as well as to gain insights into their views and beliefs.

DO write letters! Letters are a very effective tool! Organize letter-writing parties with your friends and neighbors—sending letters to legislators and newspaper editors. Check out our sample letters [online](#), all that you need to do is fill in the blanks!

DO follow up! Follow the process carefully, and let HEC know what you learn from your legislators. The more we know about legislators' concerns and questions, the more effectively we can represent your viewpoints at the Statehouse. Also, stay in touch with your legislators to build a long-term relationship!

DON'T critique! Try to avoid a partisan debate. Discuss your issue based on the merits of policy.

DON'T go off topic! Limit your advocacy to a single issue, discussing unrelated topics will not help to strengthen the support of your issue.

DON'T forget to follow up! Stay informed on your issue and track how your legislator responds.



Follow the legislative process on HEC's Bill Watch 2021 page at www.hecweb.org/bill-watch-2021. Bill Watch will help you:

- Learn more about the key legislative issues and where HEC stands on priority bills
- Find upcoming meetings and events
- Link to the Indiana General Assembly website

The Indiana General Assembly website at iga.in.gov will help you:

- Find your legislators and how to contact them—"who's your legislator"
- Find bill texts and status, amendments, roll call votes, and fiscal impact statements
- House and Senate committee schedules and floor calendars
- Watch webcasts of committee hearings and floor votes on-line